

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AID-20 AGR-20 PA-04 PRS-01

USIA-15 DRC-01 /111 W

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P 102215Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7244

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2215

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, CS

SUBJAKT: UNITED FRUIT WORKERS ON STRIKE

1. TODAY'S PRESS REPORTED THAT MORE THAN 4,000 BANANA WORKERS AT UNITED FRUIT'S GOLFITO-BASED FARMS WENT ON STRIKE THIS MORNING. THE STRIKE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN DECLARED LEGAL BY THE LABOR COURT AND SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR HAD FAILED. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE STRIKE IS LIMITED ONLY TO BANANA WORKERS AND DOES NOT INCLUDE AFFILIATED WORKERS IN HOSPITALS, THE RAILROAD, AND THE PORT.

2. COMMENT: MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIALS TOLD THE EMBASSY TODAY, JUNE 10, THAT THEY ARE EXPECTING A LONG STRIKE, POSSIBLY LASTING AS LONG AS TWO OR THREE WEEKS. THE MAIN ISSUE IS NOW OVER WAGES WITH THE COMPANY OFFERING A 24-PERCENT WAGE INCREASE AGAINST THE WORKERS DEMANDS FOR OVER 40 PERCENT. ALTHOUGH MINISTRY OFFICIALS ARE SOMEWHAT UNEASY OVER THE LONGER TERM POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE, THEY SEEM PRETTY RELAXED AT THE PRESENT TIME. MINISTER OF LABOR MORALES IS CONTINUING HIS EFFORTS TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE AND HAS TODAY MET AGAIN WITH BOTH COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES AND UNION OFFICIALS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, WAGES, LABOR STRIKES, AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, BANANAS, LABOR OBJECTIVES, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, BUSINESS FIRMS, MEETINGS, LABOR DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, WAGE RATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: WorrelSW
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANJO02215
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740150-0302, D740149-0008
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740659/aaaabyvx.tel
Line Count: 61
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: WorrelSW
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 SEP 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <28 FEB 2003 by WorrelSW>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KT: UNITED FRUIT WORKERS ON STRIKE
TAGS: ELAB, CS, UNITED FRUIT, (MORALES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005